



THE FUTURE

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The Future is a newsletter periodically published by The Future Institute.

This newsletter aims to chronicle the significant events and developments in the societies of the emerging nations with the potential of impacting their future.

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Anwar Ibrahim becomes PM in a milestone for Malaysian democracy

Anwar Ibrahim was sworn in as Malaysia's 10th Prime Minister after a twenty-five-year struggle for reform of Malaysian politics. This came after a swearing-in ceremony in front of the Malaysian king Sultan Abdullah, who intervened in the process of naming the Prime Minister after Anwar's Pakatan Harapan (PH) coalition won the most number of seats (82) in Malaysia's tightly contested general election, but not enough to gain the 112 seats parliamentary majority necessary to form a government, which had resulted in a hung parliament, with former Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin's Malay-based Perikatan Nasional (PN) trailing behind with 73 seats. The king then met with Anwar and Muhyiddin, as well as the newly elected members of parliament, and came to the decision to appoint Anwar as Malaysian PM.

A firebrand politician since his student days, Anwar Ibrahim started his political career with Malaysia's Islamic youth movement ABIM, after which he joined the mainstream party UMNO in 1982 and rose through the ranks to become the deputy Prime Minister under Mahathir Mohamad in the 1990s. After a falling out between the two over economic policies, Mahathir had him removed as deputy PM, and Anwar embarked on leading public protests against the Barisan Nasional coalition led by UMNO for political reform. In 1999, Anwar was imprisoned on politically motivated sodomy and corruption charges, for which he spent almost a decade in jail, and from which he was only granted a royal pardon in 2018. In 2016, he partnered with then 92-year-old Mahathir, his once mentor and then nemesis, to score a historic electoral victory against ruling UMNO. Mahathir, however, reneged on his promise of handing the premiership to Anwar Ibrahim, which the latter could only achieve through the current elections. Anwar Ibrahim has vowed to shoulder the duties entrusted to him with "utmost humility" and move away from race-based policies that had been the staple policies of previous governments towards a more inclusive and Malaysian-centric approach towards political governance.

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Lula wins Brazil Elections as far-right Bolsonaro concedes defeat

The Brazil 2022 General elections to elect a new President turned out to be a hair-splitting affair as left-leaning former president Luis Inacio Lula De Silva narrowly defeated his far-right opponent Jair Bolsonaro, the incumbent president. After no candidate was able to win a clear majority in the first round, the election was decided in the run-offs, where Lula received 50.90% of the votes to Bolsonaro's 49.10% in the second round of the presidential elections, which experts say is the closest presidential election result in Brazil to date. Lula, previously elected as the president in 2002 and 2006, ran and won for the presidency for the third term on the ticket of the leftist Worker's Party after being denied the chance to run in 2018 over a conviction for corruption charges. Bolsonaro, on the other hand, had been elected in 2018 and was seeking a second term in office as the candidate of the far-right Liberal Party. Despite initial fears that Bolsonaro would deny the election results and initiate violence, he eventually conceded defeat in the wake of missives from the Supreme Court and the army to respect the results and resolve disputes through peaceful means.

Even before the run-off, however, Bolsonaro's party had already gained a significant number of seats in the lower house of Brazil's Congress, winning 99 seats, or 23 seats more than in 2017, thus controlling almost half of the legislative chamber along with allies. This has signalled a broader rightward shift in the general election held on October 2, a different scenario from earlier elections of a scattered right, pointing to the rise of Bolsonarism, a more ideologically uniform far-right movement centred around Bolsonaro, backed by political and social conservatives and evangelicals. Despite Bolsonaro's rule being characterised in

international media by the growth of evangelical fundamentalism, erosion of democratic institutions and the devastation of the Amazon rainforest, his policies have also helped the poor sections of the society through the economic downturn in the pandemic era, which analysts have said explain why the elections should not be seen simply as the poor-supported Lula versus an elite-supported Bolsonaro, but a reflection of ground realities and deepening polarisation in the Brazilian society on economic and religious grounds.

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US midterms 2022: How it went?

The US midterm elections, held in the middle of the US President's four-year office term, are often a time when the incumbent party in power loses seats or even the control of the Senate or the House of Representatives. Keeping that tradition in mind, analysts and pollsters had been predicting a 'red' Republican wave this November, where all the seats of the House of Representatives were up for election, along with one-third of the Senate. Surprisingly, however, the Democrats attained control of the Senate with 50 seats after winning Pennsylvania, while Republicans retained 49 seats, with the remaining seat being Georgia and its run-off in December. Even if Republicans win in Georgia, Democrats will have the upper hand

in a tied Senate with the tie-breaking casting vote of the current Democrat Vice President. On the other hand, the Republicans won control of the lower House of Representatives after passing the threshold of 218 seats; they currently hold 220 seats to the 213 Democrat seats.

One person most negatively affected by the midterms was former President Donald Trump since most of the Republican candidates he backed did not perform well in the midterms. Moreover, immediately after the midterms, Trump announced his intention to run in the 2024 Presidential elections from his home at Mar-o-Lago, despite being advised against it by senior Republicans for fears that it could negatively affect the Senate run-off in Georgia. More recently, Trump has also been accused of hosting antisemitic and white nationalist personalities at a Thanksgiving dinner event, which has enraged many Republicans who have begun to distance themselves away from him; Trump himself felt forced to issue several statements on social media on the issue. Other Republicans who could challenge Trump for the Republican ticket include Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, Former Vice President Mike Pence, and Texas Senator Ted Cruz, among others, and experts have signalled that the poor performance in the midterms is sure to make the road to 2024 much more difficult for Trump, and easier for the other contenders.

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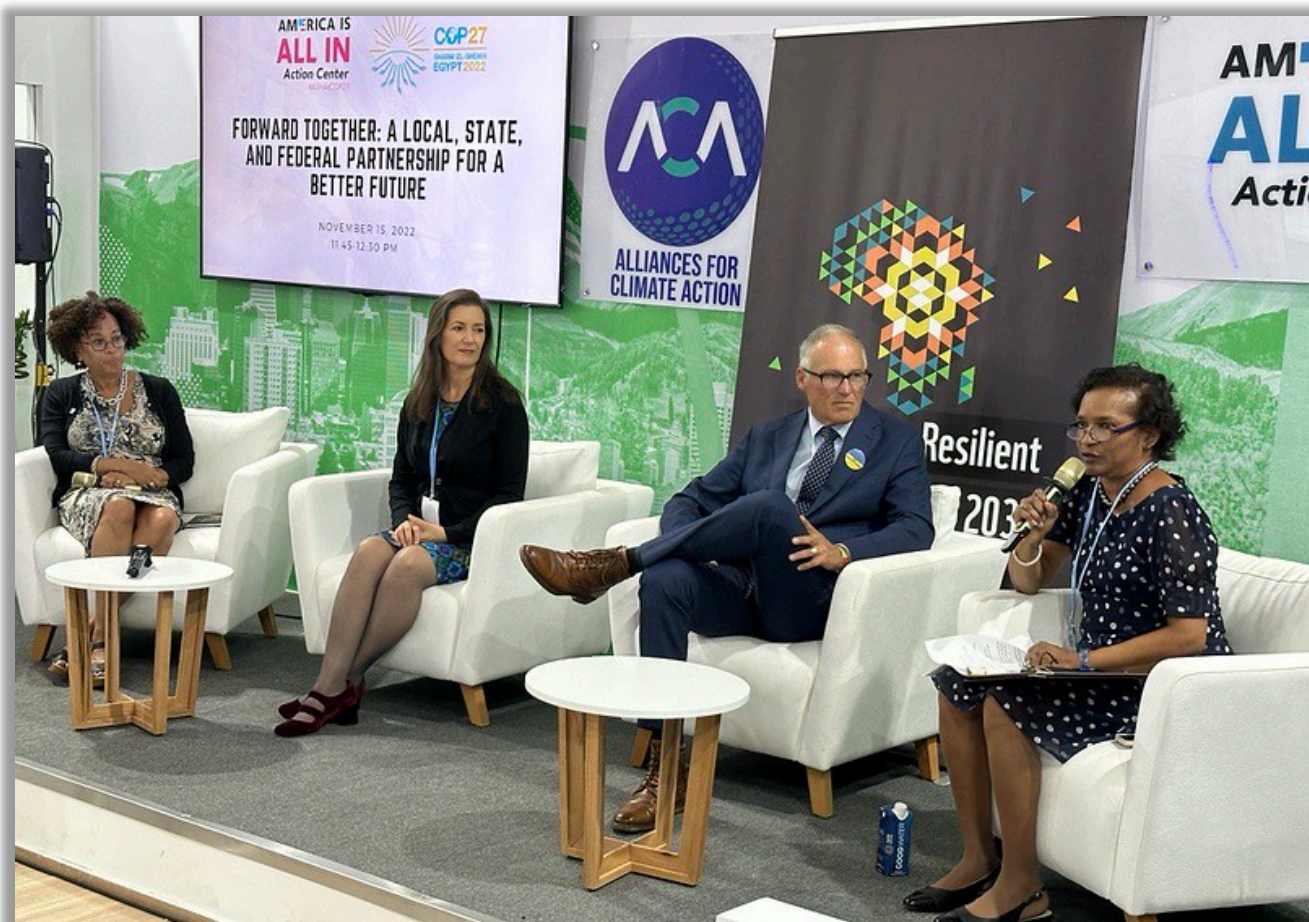
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COP 27: Another missed opportunity to tackle climate change?

The 27th United Nations Climate Change Conference, also known as COP27, was held from 6-20 November at Sharm El Sheikh in Egypt, with the attendance of more than 92 heads of state and delegates from 190 countries. Despite the urgency of the issue of climate change, no stronger agreement was reached regarding commitment to adhering to the 1.5C goal by 2100 to combat climate change by halving emissions by 2030, with some countries such as China and India even questioning the scientific validity of the figure. As such, no commitment to phase out fossil fuels was made at the conference either. The conference was also attended by many delegates and lobbyists linked to fossil fuel industries, with the BBC reporting that there were more fossil fuel lobbyists attending the summit than the total number of delegates from some of the countries most impacted by climate change, including Pakistan, Bangladesh and Mozambique, signalling the rising interest of climate change-connected corporations in influencing the general debate.

The situation is complicated by the fact that, on the one hand, many rejected the idea that developing nations needed to stop exploring their oil and gas reserves in exchange for renewable energy and funding from richer nations, while on the other hand, the biggest polluters such as China had all but rejected to commit to lower their emissions. World leaders such as US President Biden, among others, made promises to lower their emissions to reach targets by 2030, as well as pledging money for poorer nations affected by climate change. At the end of the conference, an agreement was reached to set up a loss and damage fund for the most affected nations by climate change, a step hailed by analysts as being in the right direction. The COP27 conference was, however, overshadowed by other concerns, such as protests by climate activists against perceived inaction from global leaders and Egypt's dismal human rights records.

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G20 summit held in Indonesia

The G20 summit, held this year on 15-16 November in Bali, Indonesia, dealt with some pressing global issues – including the Russian invasion of Ukraine, member’s concerns related to Chinese policies, financial crises stemming from the global pandemic, as well as the issue of climate change. Russian aggression in Ukraine was deplored in the “strongest terms,” with a demand for unconditional withdrawal in the summit declaration; Russian President Vladimir Putin was absent at the summit, with Russian Foreign minister Sergei Lavrov heading the Russian delegation in his place. A highlight of the meeting was the three-hour-long meeting between China’s Xi Jinping and the US’s Joe Biden at the sidelines of the Bali summit, where the leaders promised to cooperate on global challenges and agreed on the need to improve strained relations. Statements issued by both countries showed that issues at this meeting ranged between Taiwan, trade and the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The coinciding of the G20 meeting with the climate change summit COP27 held in Egypt meant that tackling climate was a major issue. While G20 leaders agreed to continue to adhere to the 1.5C goal as originally agreed upon in the 2015 Paris Agreement, the same did not reflect in the final statement from COP27, which failed to issue a statement for stronger commitments towards lowering emissions. The G20 is an intergovernmental forum, including both industrialised and developing nations, comprising 19 countries and the EU, which between them, account for some of the largest global economies, two-thirds of the world’s population, and 60% of the world’s area. It convenes at least once a year to address major issues related to the global economy, including financial crises, climate change and developmental issues. The upcoming G20 meeting in 2023 will be held in India.

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Deadly attack in Istanbul

A bomb exploded in a busy tourist spot at the heart of Istanbul in Turkey on 13 November, killing six people - a nine-year-old girl and her father, a teenager and her mother, and a married couple, all Turkish citizens, while injuring 81 others. Turkish authorities, following up on investigations and questioning of arrested suspects, later announced that Kurdish separatist militants the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) were behind the terrorist attack, although the said organisations quickly denied any links to the attacks. Turkish Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu announced the arrest of the bomber Ahlam Albashir, a Syrian woman who confessed to being trained by the PKK and forty-six others on the next day. Turkish intelligence and police soon made further arrests and established the identity of another fugitive who had been with the bomber, Bilal Hassan, who was a known PKK/YPG affiliate, and who had escaped to Bulgaria after the attack.

In the aftermath of the bombing, Turkish forces made retaliatory strikes against various positions of the Kurdish separatists in Northern Syria and Iraq. Analysts have suggested that the Istanbul terrorist attack was in response to the intensification of Ankara's drone attacks and operations against the PKK in recent months. The attack led to an outpouring of condemnations and condolences from all over the world. Analysts have surmised that the Turkish response to the attack could include a ground operation to root out the SDF/YPG/PKK from northern Syria, although this would require tacit acceptance from the several international players involved in Syria, including Iran, the US and Russia. Currently, intensive negotiations have been reported between Turkey and the other international players to make way for a controlled ground offensive in northern Syria to both combat terrorism and avoid exacerbating an already fragile situation on the ground.

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Organization of Turkic States 2022 Summit held at Samarkand

The 2022 Organization of Turkic States Summit was held at Samarkand, Uzbekistan, on 10 and 11 November, in the wake of two earlier separate meetings held by ministers of finance and foreign affairs. The international organisation consists of five full members – Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, and observer states Hungary and Turkmenistan. Among other steps taken to strengthen cooperation in political, foreign policy, and security issues at the summit, the Samarkand declaration was signed and approved by the heads of state. According to the official website, the main agenda topics were the decisions and signing of the protocol on amendments to the Nakhchivan Agreement, the Organization of Turkic States Strategy for 2022-2026, the Trade Facilitation Strategy of the Organization of Turkic States, the Agreement on Establishment of Simplified Customs Corridor, the Agreement on International Combined Freight Transport, Transport Connectivity Program, the Memorandum of Understanding Between Relevant Institutions of the Member States of the Organization of Turkic States About Digital Human Resources Systems, and Trade Facilitation Strategy of the Organization of Turkic States.

Some of the key decisions taken at the summit consisted of the inclusion of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus as an observer state, awarding the Supreme Order of the Turkic World to Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan and Turkmenistan leader Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, reaffirmation of support for normalisation of Azerbaijan-Armenia relations, alongside the curbing of terrorism and human trafficking among others.

Among the key developments in the financial and trade aspects was the establishment of the Turkic Investment Fund, which would work towards building a more integrated Turkic financial system by providing necessary resources for economies of member and observer states.

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World population hits 8 billion amidst declining birth rates

The global population has hit the milestone of 8 billion, according to a projection from the United Nations. A UN statement on the milestone said that 1 billion people were added to the global population in just 12 years, owing to the gradual increase in the human lifespan courtesy of improvements in public health, nutrition, personal hygiene and medicine, alongside high rates of fertility in some regions. Despite this phenomenal growth, however, the growth rate has steadily fallen to less than 1% per year, with some countries such as China expecting to have a shrinking and ageing population with a fertility rate of just 1.16%. among the lowest in the world. The prospect of an ageing society carries with it the prospect of a declining labour force and increasing costs overlooking after rising numbers of old people.

On another front, having more people on the planet means more pressure on and for natural resources. Combined with upcoming climate change patterns, it will set the stage for potential conflicts and mass migrations. While India is set to overtake China in terms of population growth, nations in Africa are expected to see booming populations in the coming decades. Since such nations are also at the forefront of facing the most adverse effects of climate change and also bear the brunt of the impact of the carbon emissions of the richest 1%, it is imperative that policymakers and global leaders take urgent measures to tackle the potential effects of climate change and environmental impact in the future due to current and continuing global North-South wealth gap, unequal human consumption patterns and destructive energy policies.

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Chaos reigns supreme in social media world as Musk becomes Twitter CEO, and Facebook parent company Meta cuts thousands of jobs

The pandemic boom that drove the performance of tech companies, especially social media giants such as Twitter and Facebook, seems to have turned into a bust this year in the face of inflation and rising interest rates. The reaction to this bust has often been broad job cuts, as seen in the case of Meta, the parent company behind Facebook, and Elon Musk's newly acquired Twitter. Meta Platforms Inc recently announced a job cut of 13 per cent of its workforce, or more than 11,000 employees, as the company battles soaring

costs, a weak advertising market, loss of active users and worsening performance on the stock markets and profits; Meta shares have lost more than two-thirds of their value this year.

On the other hand, fortunes at Twitter, which had already been suffering in the aftermath of the pandemic, seemed to plunge further after the \$44 billion takeover by Tesla CEO Elon Musk. Following his dramatic takeover in the wake of months of indecision and hand-wringing, Musk went through with his promise to fire a large number of Twitter employees, including many top executives, after which he stirred up controversy by scrapping twitter verification policies, making the traditional blue tick reserved for accounts of public interest available to any user for a \$7.99 monthly subscription. The measure, criticised by many existing verified users, unleashed hell on the platform after a flood of impersonator accounts began tweeting in the name of prominent figures and companies such as George Bush, Tony Blair, LeBron James, Nintendo games, Tesla, and Elon Musk himself. Tweets from fake accounts posing as Eli Lilly and Lockheed Martin actually led to the companies losing billions of dollars on the stock market. In the process, many large advertisers such as General Motors, Audi, and others have suspended ads on the platform as they await clarity on changes to the site's moderation policies, which has hurt Twitter revenues even further, with Musk stating that Twitter was losing millions in revenue every day.

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